

## Developing Team Performance – The Dynamics



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## 1. INTRODUCTION – WHAT DO WE MEAN BY TEAMS?

This workshop along with the pre and post work focuses on one key aspect of effective team working - the need for a leader to understand and manage the sometimes hidden undercurrents of behaviour and interaction between team members. It is about optimising the synergies of the group, and ensuring that the sum of its parts can be a more powerful force than a group of separate individuals.

It will focus on building practical leadership skills to enable you to:

- i. Analyse and assess your team's current dynamics and level of functioning (maturity)
- ii. Identify what attitudes and actions are required from a leader to support positive team dynamics
- iii. Define own strategies and plans for building and creating healthy dynamics in your teams.
- iv. Follow-up your plans and evaluate progress in the team 2-3 months' post programme

### WHAT IS A TEAM??

What makes a team a real team? And why does team work really matter in an age where brilliant individuals can produce amazing results and innovation?

A team is a group of people who are interdependent with respect to information, resources and skills and who seek to combine their efforts to achieve a common goal.

In a groundbreaking 1993 article by Katzenbach and Smith, *The Discipline of Teams*, the authors say that if managers want to make better decisions about teams, they must be clear about what a team is. They define a team as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable." That definition lays down the discipline that teams must share to be effective. A high performing team is one that has members who are highly committed to one another's personal growth and success.

### Why does excellent team work matter?

Think about the times where you have worked in teams in the past – and where you have felt supported, where the team work has flowed and everyone feels free to speak their mind; where work is completed on time and everyone feels aligned to the team goals?



Alternatively, have there been occasions when you have been in a team which never really worked for you? i.e. You were unable to get work done effectively, were never able to relax, where everyone wanted to talk and no one listened?

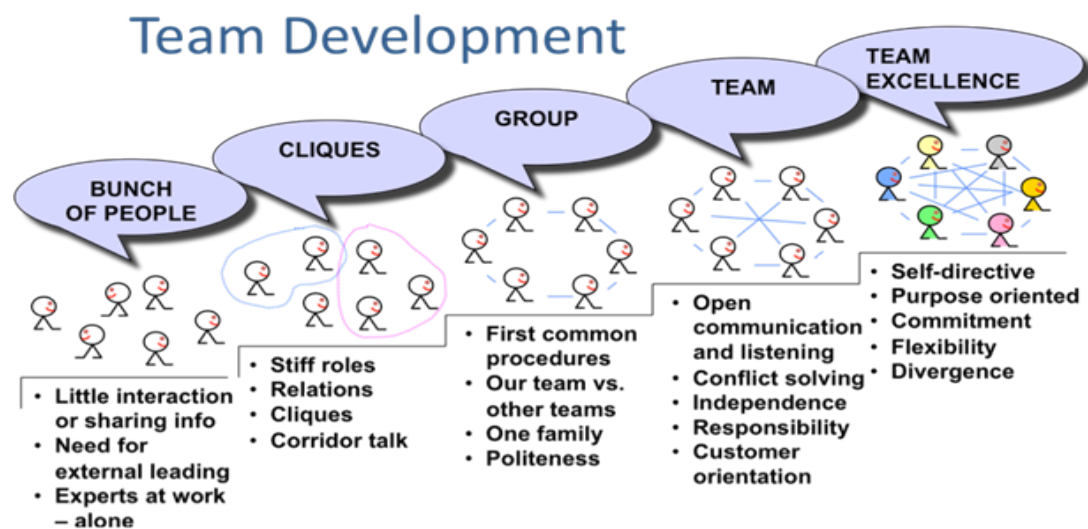
Where would you rather spend your time? It is not just about liking the members of the team. Excellent team dynamics means work can be done faster and more effectively

## What is the difference between a team and a working group??

With a run-of-the-mill working group, performance is a function of what the members do as individuals. A team's performance, by contrast, calls for both individual and mutual accountability. The fundamental factors that distinguish between work groups and real teams are the presence or absence of:

- an incremental performance need or opportunity
- true interdependence and
- real shared accountability.

The best single criterion to use for determining whether a team or a work group is the best choice for a given situation is this: *Does an incremental performance need or opportunity exist?* It is important to select the right kind of group, either work group or team, for each situation. One is not inherently better than the other. If an incremental performance need or opportunity exists, then a team is a potentially better choice. If it does not, then a work group is preferable. Teams have greater performance potential, but require more development and maintenance than work groups. It comes down to an issue of return on investment.



To read more about what makes a team, follow the links below:

- *The Discipline of Teams*, Katzenbach & Smith (1993), - a power point summary of key points <https://www.google.be/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=the%20discipline%20of%20teams%20katzenbach%20summary>
- Article on Team Spirit by Schumpeter in the Economist – March 2015 <http://www.economist.com/news/business-and-finance/21694962-managing-them-hard-businesses-are-embracing-idea-working-teams>
- An article explaining the need for purpose – a compelling direction <https://hbr.org/2016/06/the-secrets-of-great-teamwork>



## 2. WHAT ARE TEAM DYNAMICS?

Being part of a well-functioning group or team can give a profound feeling of security and wellbeing.

Team dynamics are the unconscious, psychological forces that influence the direction of a team's **behaviour** and **performance**. They are like the undercurrents in the sea, which can carry a boat in a different direction to the one it intends to sail. And while team dynamics are elusive and difficult to define, we can recognize when the dynamics in the team are good - for example, when they improve overall team performance and/or get the best out of individual team members. They can also be bad - for example, when they cause unproductive conflict, demotivation, and prevent the team from achieving its goals.

The word 'dynamic' is appropriate because it is constantly **developing and deepening** as communication, connections and shifts in relationships take place.

By their very nature team dynamics are **multi-layered** and the result of the interaction of many factors. For leaders, facilitating positive team dynamics necessitates an understanding of the different and sometimes seemingly hidden or secret elements in the team i.e. recognising behaviours that support or hinder healthy dynamics and facilitating conversations that create the climate in which each team member can give of their best.

In managing team dynamics leaders need to develop their ability to:

- Understand the **elements** which shape overall team dynamics & the **interdependency** between them
- Recognise the potential **drawbacks** of team/group work and common **dysfunctions**
- Lead the team as an **entity** rather than a group of individuals
- Ensure **clarity** and generate energy around the team's purpose, direction and objectives
- Create collective appreciation for the team's **composition**, i.e. individual personalities, contributions, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- Facilitate collective agreements around **collaborative** work practices and processes
- Role-model and enable optimal information & knowledge and healthy **communication** practices
- Build trust through creating a psychologically safe environment which ensures a **climate** of emotional wellbeing, respect and mutual support
- Adopt a leader-**coach** style to encourage team learning and development, and increasing levels of team autonomy

Individual staff and the team as a whole know what results are required and what success looks like



### 3. THE 6 'C'S OF EXCELLENT TEAM DYNAMICS

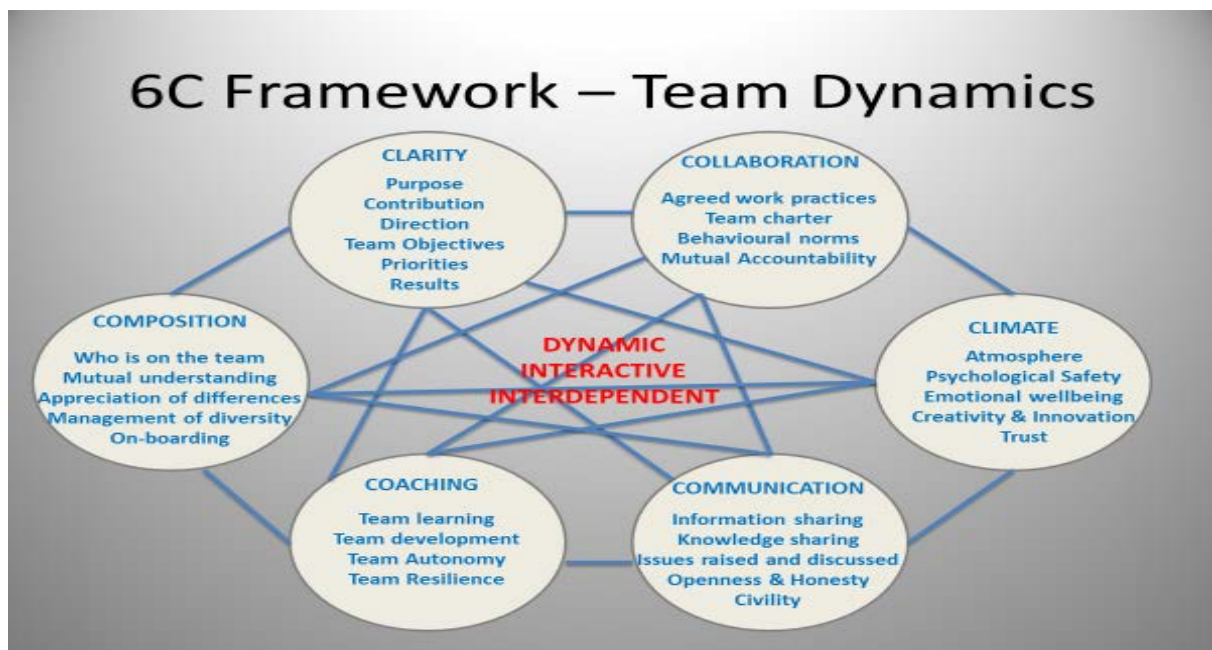
Katzenbach and Smith (1993) developed their work to look at how effective teams can develop into high-performing teams.. Their model shows how for a work group to decide to become a team, they have to invest time and energy in making it happen and also be willing to see performance dip potentially as the group makes the transition.

We have developed a framework for developing excellent teams in the institutions – the 6 C framework

When managing team dynamics, the leader needs to create clarity and energy around the team's purpose and direction, to facilitate the interactions and relationships between team members, to generate agreement around collaborative work processes and effective communication, to support team learning and development and to enable a healthy team climate.

The 6 C's provide a framework to explore the attitudes, behaviours and skills required by the leader to create positive team dynamics which deliver high-performance and ongoing learning. While they appear separate, they are of course inter-dependent.

These are factors to consider/observe which may be the **cause** or **source** of a dynamic, or the way an underlying dynamic is revealed (**signs** or **symptoms**).



#### Clarity

This element is about how leaders create clarity and energy around why the team exists (purpose), how its contribution fits into the wider context of the Institutions and Europe. It is also about clarity of direction, and team objectives, priorities and results.

#### Collaboration

This is about well the leader enables key agreements in the team on how the team chooses to work together (team charter), the processes, procedures and group norms they commit to using to produce good work e.g. work standards, planning, decision-making, problem-solving, conflict handling, accountability, tele-working & working across geographical distance etc. Other key phenomenon related to this are cooperation and competition.



### **Composition**

This is about who is on the team and how well the leader and all members understand and appreciate the diverse personalities, qualities, work styles, interest, skills and knowledge in the team. It is also about roles and responsibilities being clear and different contributions being valued. It can also include how new members are integrated and how departures are managed.

### **Coaching**

This facet ensures the ongoing learning and development of the team. It is about empowering the team through both challenge and support and ensuring the team learns from experience. It is also about how the leader builds team autonomy and self-direction in the team.

### **Communication**

This is about how the leader facilitates team information and knowledge sharing, and how s/he supports civility, openness and honesty, ensures all team members have a voice, the team ability to disagree constructively and raise difficult issues for discussion, to give and receive feedback, to be effective in meetings, to balance inquiry & advocacy, and generate positivity through interactions.

### **Climate**

This is about how the leader goes about building trust in the team, ensuring a psychologically safe environment, ensures emotional well-being in the team and builds an environment of mutual respect and support. It is also linked to creativity and innovation, in that if people feel safe, they will take intelligent risks and expect to learn from trial and error.

These 6 factors are systemic and missing just one of these factors can have an impact on the others. They provide a way of measuring and assessing the health of the team but each one of them cannot be looked at in isolation. i.e. As an example if you are experiencing tensions/conflicts in the team these could arise due to–

- personality issues (composition),
- roles or rules of collaboration have not been agreed (collaboration)
- goals are not clear or results are poor (clarity),
- the tone of communication changes (communication),
- issues are not addressed or addressed poorly (coach),....

and which affects the overall confidence and trust levels (climate).

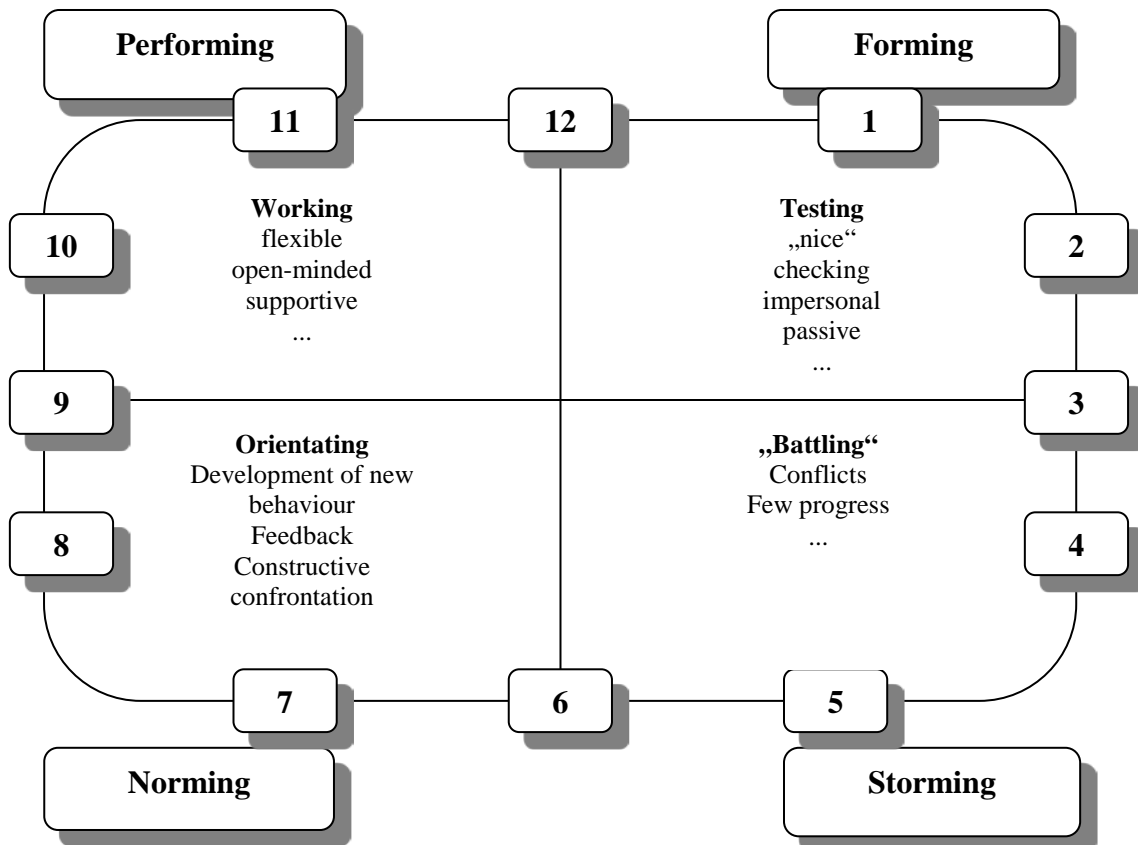
So while we could place tensions under many C's in the structure, we have chosen to place it in the 'Coaching' section because unless there is intervention of whatever kind on the signs or symptoms, negative dynamics will result.



#### 4. THE STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Teams, like other organisms, have a recognisable pattern of growth that can be observed and described. All teams/groups come together, establish why they are working together and how this will happen, perform their given task(s) and will often then be disbanded. In this sequence, each team/group will vary; the members' tasks and timeframes are all different and so the ways in which the stages of development are manifested will be different in each team/group.

This model was developed by Bruce Tuckman in the 1960s and has been developed since.





## **Forming (Ritual)**

When the team first forms, the members are like hesitant swimmers, dipping their toes in the water. They are uncertain as to what to expect, what it will be like in this team, and how they will fit in.

Characteristics of teams in the forming stage:

People conform, Feelings are avoided; Emotions are hidden; Change is resisted; Personal contact is superficial; There is a dependency on the leader for guidance; The team adheres to rules and guidelines; Individual members seem anxious; People make small talk; There is a focus on generalities.

In the forming stage the Team Leader should: Get to know the balance of skills in the team; Examine the team's objectives and targets; Work to establish trust and openness between the leader and individuals as well as among the whole team; Be directive (tell, sell) if the team needs direction, and prepare the team for empowerment as soon as possible

## **Storming (In fighting)**

As they realise what is involved being part of the team, there is some panic, similar to non-swimmers jumping in the deep-end. This is often a difficult time for the team, and can be characterised by conflict. There may be resistance to the systematic approach and alliances will be formed to build up influence.

Characteristics of teams in the storming stage:

Feelings and emotions begin to be explored and expressed; Listening skills deteriorate and people interrupt and talk over each other; Leadership can be challenged and outsiders are rejected; The team can feel as if it is splintering/ disintegrating; There is competition among team members; Fight or flight; Resistance to others' ideas; Questioning

In the storming stage the Team Leader should; Encourage people to be open, but not confrontational, about their differences; Help them to see differences positively; Ensure a high level of discussion and debate, particularly around contentious issues

It is important to note that team leaders should not ignore this vital stage of team development. If issues are not worked through adequately conflict may become subversive and teams may split into warring factions.

## **Norming (Experimentation)**

As they get used to working together, members stop struggling and start helping each other to stay afloat. There is more cohesion and more acceptances of common problems.

Characteristics of teams in the norming stage:

Flexibility and little defensiveness; Willing to accept change; Conflict resolved; More openness, with the team developing a systematic approach to tasks; Members want to help each other and share experiences; People listen more carefully; There is a commitment to emerging leadership; The team becomes task focused; There is a shared responsibility for team processes

In the norming stage the Team Leader should: Help the team develop ground rules about desired behaviours; Instigate regular process reviews; Consolidate his/her own relationship within the team in terms of accessibility, support, decision-making processes and so on



## **Performing** (Maturity)

Now that members have accepted each other, feel comfortable with the team, and are clear about the purpose, they become productive - ready for synchronised swimming!

Characteristics of teams in the performing stage: Team members have pride in task and in team membership; There is individual commitment to tasks; Team members are fully and openly involved; There is a sense of achievement; People are having fun; There is praise and criticism; Straight talk; Mutual support and challenging; Reach decisions; Intensity about task completion

In the performing stage the Team Leader should: Provide the level of support the team needs; Maintain open communications and joint problem solving to help the team to function well; Manage the boundaries between the team and the rest of the organisation

If the team members change, or if the team meets major problems, then the team may need to go through the cycle again. Just because conflict is in the past, it doesn't mean that it won't re-occur in the future.

Understanding Team Formation – Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, ,  
[https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_86.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm)



## 5. MANAGING THE TEAM AS AN ENTITY

Leading a team is different from managing a group of individuals. What are the responsibilities of leading a team as a whole as opposed to a set of individuals?

The effective team operates in a way that is more than a group of individuals. i.e. it is more than a sum of its parts. And even if these individuals are all highly qualified and specialised in their particular field, the manager needs to enhance their overall effectiveness by understanding the importance of the team and enabling them to operate as an entity – i.e. to be aware of the way they interact, the impact of each on the other, and recognising the undercurrent of the dynamics of the team. The leader will need to operate as a type of team coach.

The team also does not operate in isolation, and so the leader needs also to assess how it relates to the wider organisation in which it operates. How is it perceived?

Manage the ‘how’ not the who of the team. Be aware of the processes, the tensions, the strengths of relationships and the warning signs of things not going well. It is useful to recognise that exchange in a group has many advantages over exchange in a one to one relationship. There is a far wider range of opportunities for productive learning. The leader of the team can optimise these exchanges.

The leader’s responsibilities towards the team/group as an entity are to

- establish, agree and communicate standards of performance and behaviour – agree some ground rules, group norms or frames of reference
- monitor and maintain a disciplined approach, ethics, civility, integrity and focus on objectives
- anticipate and help resolve team conflict, struggles, tensions or disagreements
- develop team-working, cooperation, morale and team-spirit

(and be sure to be a *role model for all* the behaviours mentioned above). When leading the team, you need to think about the message your choices reveal. Are you encouraging equality in speaking, or do you reward the loudest people? Are you demonstrating that you are listening by summarising what people have said? Are you demonstrating sensitivity by reacting when someone seems upset or worried? Your behaviour will set the tone for the rest of the team.

- develop the collective maturity and capability of the team - progressively increase team freedom and authority
- encourage the team towards objectives and aims - motivate the team and provide a collective sense of purpose
- enable, facilitate and ensure effective internal and external team communications
- identify and meet team training needs
- assess and change as necessary the balance and composition of the team
- identify, develop and agree team- and project-leadership roles within team
- give feedback to the team on overall progress; consult with, and seek feedback and input from the team

**Watkins, M** - Leading the team you inherit, <https://hbr.org/2016/06/leading-the-team-you-inherit>, Harvard Business Review, 2016 \*

Sinek, Simon, *How great leaders inspire action*,  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action)



## 6. THE CHALLENGING ELEMENTS OF TEAM DYNAMICS

The primary focus on helping a team move forward when undertaking a task is to concentrate on the quality of the interactions of the team. And there will be times when a leader needs to recognise and help the team become self-aware of the possible elements that may detract from the team 's overall performance in terms of behaviour.

The impact of the leader failing to recognise and address an issue early on, can lead to major problems later in the team development, and these may take longer to repair.

Some of the most common problems that can occur are:

- **Weak leadership:** when a team lacks a strong leader, a more dominant member of the group can often take charge. This can lead to a lack of direction, infighting, or a focus on the wrong priorities.
- **Excessive deference to authority:** this can happen when people want to be seen to agree with a leader, and therefore hold back from expressing their own opinions.
- **Disruptive behaviours:** there are several distinct types of 'difficult behaviour' which can occur in group situations, the most common are: conflict, non-participation or withdrawal, monopolising and scapegoating.
- **Dysfunctional /Individualistic Roles:** roles that are adopted by individuals which interfere with good group process.
- **Groupthink :** this happens when people place a desire for consensus above their desire to reach the right decision. This prevents people from fully exploring alternative solutions.
- **Free riding:** here, some group members take it easy, and leave their colleagues to do all the work. Free riders may work hard on their own, but limit their contributions in group situations; this is known as "social loafing."
- **Evaluation apprehension:** team members' perceptions can also create a negative group dynamic. Evaluation apprehension happens when people feel that they are being judged excessively harshly by other group members, and they hold back their opinions as a result.

### Examples of Disruptive behaviours in teams

The most common types of disruptive behaviour are: conflict (see section 8), non-participation or withdrawal, monopolising and scapegoating. By recognising, understanding and minimising disruptive group behaviours group work becomes more effective and productive.

#### ***Non-Participation or Withdrawal***

Everyone has the right *not* to participate within the group, although it is usually preferable for all members to contribute.

Some members will prefer to observe rather than to participate vocally and others may wish to contribute but feel too shy, fear self-disclosure or lack confidence. To overcome lack of self-confidence, where members wish to contribute but fear to do so, their non-participation needs an encouraging, positive approach, however, they should not be embarrassed or pressured to participate.



Some group members who are withdrawn may just take longer to warm to the group situation and to open up. Over time, group members who were initially quite extrovert may listen more and say less, whilst those who said little initially may begin to say more, which will lead to more balanced contributions.

### ***Monopolising***

There may be times when one person in the group has a lot more to say than others.

This may be the case, for example, if one member has a focused area of expertise which needs to be shared with others. Monopolising, however, refers to one or two members dominating the group at the expense of other members' contributions.

Monopolising can lead to resentment from others in the group, feeling that they do not have the opportunity to make their points.

The leader or facilitator may reduce this problem by first acknowledging what the person has to contribute and then diverting the discussion to other people, asking their opinions and moving on. In situations that cannot be resolved in a group situation, the best strategy may be to discuss the problem with the individual concerned, in a way that is sensitive and positive and does not dampen their spirits and future contributions altogether.

### ***Scapegoating***

When things go wrong in a group situation it is sometimes easy to direct blame at one or more individuals within the group, this is known as 'scapegoating' and can be very damaging for the individual concerned and also for the group as a whole.

The person may be rejected by the group and become a target for anger, frustration and ridicule by other members. Such behaviour may lead that member to withdraw, especially if they are unwilling or unable to defend themselves. Everybody makes mistakes and we all fail sometimes; scapegoating can be comparable to bullying and most detrimental to the self-confidence of the victim.

If the group has failed because of one person, then a more appropriate way of handling the situation would be for the person concerned to have a private discussion with the group leader. Often the point of a group is to pull together and support each other – the whole group may be to blame for assigning inappropriate tasks to an individual or not providing adequate support.

In cases of scapegoating, the group leader or facilitator could restructure the group into sub-groups for a period, to reduce the effect of the whole group scapegoating one individual. Interpersonal interactions may be structured differently in a smaller unit and may help to rebuild the confidence of members. Restructuring may also alter the dynamics within the group as a whole once it has been fully reformed at a future time.

### ***Additional Problem Areas***

Many other issues may arise within groups, ranging from a general negativity to specific problems such as irregular attendance, aggressive behaviour or arguments.

The coping strategies of the leader will depend largely on the composition of the characteristics of the group e.g. their age, abilities, motivation and emotional state. Problems can often be resolved by:

- Clear guidelines as to the 'rules' or 'norms' of the group. Many formal groups will negotiate and agree on these rules at an early stage.
- Positive feedback being given to individual contributions, both from the group leader and other group members.



- Where problems do arise, their cause needs to be clearly understood.

### ***Dysfunctional and/or Individualistic Roles***

These roles disrupt group progress and weaken its cohesion.

- Aggressor – Makes personal attacks using belittling and insulting comments, for example, "That's the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard." Actions are usually an attempt to decrease another member's status.
- Blocker – Opposes every idea or opinion that is put forward and yet refuses to make own suggestions, for example, "That's not a good idea." The result is that the group stalls because it can't get past the resistance.
- Recognition Seeker – Uses group meetings to draw personal attention to him or herself. May brag about past accomplishments or relay irrelevant stories that paint him or her in a positive light. Sometimes pulls crazy stunts to attract attention like acting silly, making excess noise, or otherwise directing members away from the task at hand.
- Self-Confessor – Uses the group meetings as an avenue to disclose personal feelings and issues. Tries to slip these comments in under the guise of relevance, such as "That reminds me of a time when." May relate group actions to his or her personal life. For example, if two others are disagreeing about something, the Self-confessor may say, "You guys fight just like me and my wife."
- Disrupter/Playboy or Playgirl – Uses group meetings as fun time and a way to get out of real work. Distracts other people by telling jokes, playing pranks, or even reading unrelated material.
- Dominator – Tries to control the conversation and dictate what people should be doing. Often exaggerates his or her knowledge and will monopolize any conversation claiming to know more about the situation and have better solutions than anybody else.
- Help Seeker – Actively looks for sympathy by expressing feelings of inadequacy. Acts helpless, self-deprecating and unable to contribute. For example, "I can't help you, I'm too confused and useless with this stuff."
- Special Interest Pleader – Makes suggestions based on what others would think or feel. Avoids revealing his or her own biases or opinions by using a stereotypical position instead, for example, "The people over in Admin sure wouldn't like that idea." or "You know how cheap our suppliers are, they won't go for that."

All of these behaviours are disruptive and damaging. By spotting these behaviours and coaching people out of them, you can significantly improve your group process. Make a plan to eliminate this behaviour either through increased awareness, coaching, or feedback. These self-serving roles really must be minimized or eliminated for effective group work to emerge. By making the whole group aware of these maladaptive behaviours, individuals can monitor the behaviour and put a name to it when it occurs. This alone should decrease much of the disruptive behaviour.

Duhigg, C. *Teams, Psychological Safety at Google* (2016)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-the-perfect-team.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-the-perfect-team.html?_r=0)

A powerful example of one person's refusal to fit with the group's thinking – Taken from the film - 12 Angry Men <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRW8vgoHOWg>



## 7. ENSURING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Under the influence of growing social and organisational complexity, the amount of time we devote to meetings has continued to increase. As the team leader it is your responsibility to facilitate these meetings to ensure they are productive and that all voices are heard.

There are some basic premises to follow such as:

- Only convene those concerned
- Strive for an optimum number of participants (3-15 Optimum = 7)
- Meet with a clear and specific objective in mind
- Encourage meeting preparation (topic, objective, plan and procedure in the invitation)
- Encourage active participation by all (giving each person the opportunity to participate)
- Make discipline part and parcel of the task (start and end on time, necessary resources)
- Remove any contact with the outside world (phone, mail, tweet and other requisitions)

As the leader you will be responsible for ensuring an effective outcome through your ability to

- Build and maintain rapport between the group members
- Actively listen and observe team behaviour
- Ask key and insightful questions to draw out and explore issues
- Effectively manage information derived from the facilitation process i.e. to gather and analyse the ideas/proposals required to help the team meet its objectives; and to ensure accurate records of the outcomes etc.

There are different styles of facilitation and the effectiveness of these will depend on the purpose of the meeting. Heron in his Intervention Model describes two possible styles as: "authoritative" and "facilitative." Those two categories further break down into a total of six categories to describe how people intervene when helping, supporting or coaching.

If a helping intervention is "authoritative," it means that the person supporting (often a manager or supervisor) is giving information, challenging the other person, or suggesting what the other person should do.

If a supporting intervention is "facilitative," it means that the person "helping" is drawing out ideas, solutions, self-confidence, and so on, from the other person, helping him or her to reach his or her own solutions or decisions.

You can use the model to look at the way you communicate in general but also how you run your meetings. If you habitually use one or two styles, the model will help you learn and use more of the styles, and so improve your impact and the outcome of the help you give



Authoritative	Prescriptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give advice and guidance</li> <li>• Tell the other person how they should behave</li> <li>• Tell them what to do</li> </ul>
	Informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give your view and experience</li> <li>• Explain the background and principles</li> <li>• Help the other person get a better understanding</li> <li>• Challenge the other person's thinking</li> </ul>
	Confronting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play back exactly what the person has said or done</li> <li>• Tell them what you think is holding them back</li> <li>• Help them avoid making the same mistake again</li> </ul>
Facilitative	Cathartic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help the other person express their feelings or fears</li> <li>• Empathize with them</li> <li>• Ask questions to encourage fresh thinking</li> </ul>
	Catalytic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the other person to generate new options and solutions</li> <li>• Listen and summarize, and listen some more</li> <li>• Tell the other person you value them (their contribution, good intention or achievements)</li> </ul>
	Supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Praise them</li> <li>• Show them they have your support and commitment</li> </ul>





## Tips Before, during and after the meeting.

### Before a meeting – have I:

- made the purpose of the meeting clear for me and for all participants?
- Ensured there are clear SMART objectives and outcomes, and have I circulated them to all participants?
- designed and circulated a clear, precise and realistic agenda? Putting each agenda item in the form of a questions will provide more focus on the outcomes of the meeting
- clearly defined who should attend the meeting as well as the various expected roles and contributions?
- ensured participants have been provided with the elements they might need in order to prepare for the meeting?
- made sure the supporting material is ready (slides, hard copies of some documents, etc.)?
- made sure an appropriate room is available, together with all necessary equipment in working condition?
- run any possible preparatory meetings with some participants, if relevant?

### During a meeting – do I:

- start the meeting formally with a reminder of the purpose, objectives and agenda?
- start in a positive frame – i.e. a good question to start with is – *what do you think is progressing well in our work right now?*
- suggest a decision-making process (depending on the various points on the agenda)?
- make sure the length of the meeting is respected?
- ensure I am flexible enough to consider and suggest possible adjustments of the decision-making process or of durations?
- Use different methods to encourage open discussion and give people time to think i.e. working in pairs, trios, round table comments etc
- make sure each decision results in an action plan with clear roles and deadlines?
- make sure a summary of decisions is recorded step by step?
- make sure participants take the floor in a balanced way?
- pay enough attention to the group's dynamics?
- ensure participants listen to each other in an active way? (and do I make sure people are not interrupted?)
- really manage difficult behaviours?
- use the appropriate questioning style to make sure I combine challenge and support effectively?
- have enough information to make sure the final summary/minutes of the meeting can be written?
- end and we began - on a positive note and ask – what has been a success in our meeting?

### After a meeting – do I:

- check that all participants have actually received the summary of the meeting and agree with it?
- make sure that every person involved in the action plans actually delivers (including me)?
- review and give constructive feedback on specific contributions?
- seek feedback on my facilitation skills?



Kline, N. *More Time To Think*, Fisher King Publishing, 2010

Kline, N. <http://www.timetothink.com/uploaded/TE%20Imperative%20of%20Beha.pdf>

A summary of the 10 imperatives for improving our way of thinking

Jay, A., <https://hbr.org/1976/03/how-to-run-a-meeting>, Harvard Business Review, 1976

Heron, J. An overview of the intervention styles

<https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/HeronsCategories.htm>



## 8. CONFLICT AND TENSION – RECOGNISING AND DEFUSING

Conflict is part and parcel of life. All of us have conflicts but it is the ability to understand and effectively deal with conflicts which is important. In fact the first and foremost step towards conflict is understanding what conflict is. By understanding the meaning of conflict we can then move towards resolving it. So conflict is necessary and natural for a fully functioning team – and a team leader needs to realise that managing conflict is very much part of the everyday job of managing the team and individuals.

In understanding and resolving conflict we must first examine our own attitudes and feelings to conflict. Do I welcome a conflict? Do I avoid a conflict? Or do I fear a conflict? The attitude that I have towards a conflict will fundamentally affect how I respond and feel as a leader when dealing with conflicts within my team.

Disagreements within groups are common. In the same way that diversity brings strengths and advantages in a team, it also means that by definition there is also going to be a range of different views and interpretations about ideas, resources etc. Having open disagreements is often a healthy way of building cohesiveness, this is because if people disagree on a particular point they will have the opportunity to explain why and perhaps offer alternative solutions to the problems of the group.

Conflict and further discussion can be a good way of reflecting and clarifying the aims and objectives of the group and can enhance understanding by taking in the viewpoints of all group members. Conflict only becomes a problem when comments become personal, towards an individual or sub-group of individuals, or discussion takes up too much time to the detriment of the group's purpose.

Strong group leadership and cohesiveness will enable disagreements to become positive for the group and the individuals within it. The following example describes how to prevent disagreement leading to more serious problems which may be disruptive to the group.

An individual in a group may challenge what is being said by the leader or by other group members. This can lead to disruption within the group, affecting the progress and overall emotional state of the other members. Any sort of challenge or disagreement needs to be discussed openly, especially if there seems to be a valid reason for it. The person in disagreement should be encouraged to express their views in a positive way with the rest of the group. If the situation cannot be resolved in the group setting, the leader or facilitator may wish to discuss the issues which concern the individual away from the rest of the group. Alternatively, the disagreement could be dealt with at a specific time and discussed by the group, so that the group as a whole negotiates some form of resolution.

Conflict resolution in groups will depend, in part, on the leadership style and team roles of the group members.

If as a leader you have been paying attention to your team members you will be able to pre-empt the possibly simmering tensions. i.e. to step in and solve the issue before it turns into a non-resolvable conflict. The way to do this depends on the "level" of conflict and importance of the disagreement. Here is a suggested process for dealing with conflict.

1) SURFACE THE PROBLEM: Find a Private, Neutral Place Be prepared and don't wait too long. Describe behaviour/performance specifically and objectively, using a feedback tool such as CAR (Context/Action/Result): "I've noticed that this is the second time that you have not delivered the dossier by the deadline, and this has caused delays for two of your colleagues so that they have now missed their deadline too." Aim to understand their point of view: "What happened?"



Surface the problem

Create space

Add value / Look for solutions

2) CREATE SPACE Adopt a positive tone, listen to their point of view without judgment, save face Bring together the views, ideas, opinions and interests of everyone concerned Check hypotheses and seek to clarify issues i.e. ask a focused question “how did that have an impact?” Seek to understand the different views and reformulate points made to ensure understanding i.e. paraphrase or summarise “so what you’re saying is...”, or invite explanation “I’m not sure I understand...” If you feel the urge to interrupt or disagree, do not say “yes, but...” Take notes of what they are saying. This shows you are taking their point of view seriously. Empathy: show you have heard and understood the other person’s feelings and point of view; empathy does not mean you agree or have a solution to the situation. “I can really understand that it is a challenge at the moment with such a busy workload.” Share your feelings and experience where appropriate. Nine times out of 10, the real conflict is about feelings, not facts. You can argue about facts all day, but everyone has a right to his or her own feelings. Owning your own feelings, and caring about others', is key to talking about conflict. Focus on interests rather than positions Separate the person from the problem

3) ADD VALUE/LOOK FOR SOLUTIONS: Once you have ensured clear understanding then look for solutions and alternatives Come up with new solutions using techniques such as, Brainstorming, and ask for their ideas for solutions. Keep questions short: Establish a wish list, create options for all parties, sSpecify standards, e.g. “How can we make sure the report is on time? It’s important for the smooth running of the department and everyone’s planning. It also makes for a more relaxed, friendly working environment if, X and Y, and me, are not left wondering what has happened to the report.” Any ideas? Anything else? How might that work?

4) CLOSING DOWN THE CONFLICT: Agree a shared action plan: who what where when how. Offer your help and support as appropriate. Summarise your agreement; keep it realistic - one step at a time. It will not be solved all in one go. Make sure you leave each other with the ‘page clearly turned’ so everyone can move forward

The manager may not always be aware of conflict. This is when observation and diagnosis become crucial skills; the manager must inquire, understand the issues and work towards problem-solving by bringing the parties together to build a way forward (mediation). As a last resort the manager may need to arbitrate though giving his or her own reasoning in a transparent way.

For further reading, please follow the links:

- *How to pre-empt team conflict*, Toegel & Barsoux (2016):  
<https://hbr.org/2016/06/how-to-preempt-team-conflict>
- *The management of differences*, Schmidt & Tannenbaum (1960):  
<https://hbr.org/1960/11/management-of-differences>
- *How to handle difficult conversations at work*, Knight (2015):  
<https://hbr.org/2015/01/how-to-handle-difficult-conversations-at-work>
- importance of Psychological Safety  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhoLuui9gX8>
- Gentry, W. *Empathy in the Workplace*, White Paper, Centre for Creative Leadership, 2007  
<http://insights.ccl.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/EmpathyInTheWorkplace.pdf>

